U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Modernization MONITOR

PROVIDING THE RIGHT INFORMATION TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE AT THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE

Modernization Effort to See Major Expansion, Benefits in 2004

By Ruth A. Welch
Communications Manager, CBPMO

Now that the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) Secure Data Portal has been officially launched, this is the year ACE is projected to yield its first key growth in access, which will provide important benefits to the American people, the trade community, government agencies, and the global economy.

Establishment of the portal, the foundation of ACE, is the first major project in a long-term, enterprise-wide initiative to modernize U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) business processes and technology. The modernization effort will allow CBP to enhance border security while cost-effectively speeding the flow of increasing volumes of legitimate trade, which is important to the American and global economies.

The ACE Secure Data Portal, essentially a customized computer screen similar to a website homepage, provides a single, centralized on-line access point to connect CBP and the trade community. The portal will also eventually provide access to Participating Government Agencies (PGAs) with trade and border enforcement responsibilities. Through the development of collaborative tools such as the portal, ACE will provide unprecedented integration of data and communication abilities among CBP, the trade community, and government agencies.

Acting AC, OIT Charles R. Armstrong provides ACE update at November 2003 Trade Symposium in Washington D.C.

Trade Community, CBP Users See Value of ACE

Importers and CBP personnel involved in the pilot test of the ACE Secure Data Portal give ACE high marks for an easy-to-use design that saves time and increases access to information. Here are a few samples of what some are saying:

"ACE is definitely a valuable tool," said Pat Golembieski of The Home Depot, Inc. She said she very often uses the portal daily to have easy access to CBP entry information. Golembieski especially likes the new "Quick Views" feature. "The Quick Views are readily available mini-reports that allow The Home Depot to monitor trade compliance by importer of record number on a daily basis," she said. In addition, Golembieski said, "The ACE web-based portal allows each user to customize his/her ACE account home page. Websites used for research can be easily set-up and readily accessed, thereby saving time. Also, many hours of time are saved when using the reporting function in the ACE Secure Data Portal. The process of creating ACE reports is easy and fast."

R. Patrick Doyle of Stride Rite gave an emphatic "yes" when asked if ACE was a valuable resource for his company. He said, "It's nice to have a look at reports and overall compliance, and it's a good communication tool between myself and my account representative." He added, "I currently use it to look up things … it's a good source to start from and helpful in communicating with people in CBP. I have added my favorite links to the toolbar, which also saves me time."

CBPMO@dhs.gov

Message from Sharon A. Mazur, Acting Executive Director, CBPMO

Sharon A. Mazur

As the new Acting Executive Director of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Modernization Office (CBPMO), I would like to welcome you to our second edition of Modernization Monitor. This year we prepare for a key expansion of the first major CBP modernization project, the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE). It is important we continue to communicate and work with our partners in the trade community, participating government agencies, and others to ensure we create systems that meet our needs and are as user-friendly, efficient, and effective as possible. We also want to ensure the transition to ACE is as smooth as possible.

We have a lot of good news to report. The ACE Secure Data Portal, the foundation of ACE, was officially adopted by CBP this fall and is now in limited operation, with several hundred CBP personnel and members of the trade community having access to the system. User reviews have been encouraging. Regarding our next major step, design work has been completed, and construction and initial testing are underway for the introduction of electronic account revenue and truck processing features later this year. As of this writing, applications are being accepted for new importer, broker, and truck carrier accounts to participate in pilot tests this spring for the periodic payment features, and next fall for the truck processing features.

Finally, we would like to toot our horn a bit about the management of this enormous, enterprise-wide modernization effort. This fall the CBPMO received a Level Two rating on the Software Acquisition Capability Maturity Model® (SA-CMM®), which was developed by a government and industry team led by Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineering Institute. We are the first civilian government organization to achieve this important rating of organizational management abilities. We are very proud to be recognized for our efforts to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars as we remain committed to the CBP mission of facilitating safe and efficient trade that will keep our global economy healthy and growing.

We hope periodic publication of Modernization Monitor will help keep you up-to-date on Modernization progress. For more information on how Modernization can help you more efficiently navigate the international supply chain to America's borders, we invite you to visit the Modernization and ACE link on our website, www.cbp.gov.

Message from Lawrence J. Rosenzweig, CBPMO Business Executive

Lawrence J. Rosenzweig

This is the year ACE makes the leap from initial start-up operations impacting a relatively small number of importers and the CBP personnel servicing those accounts, to serving up to 20,000 users by year's end when access is expanded throughout up to seven of the busiest land-border ports. My role as CBPMO Business Executive is to make sure ACE "aces" the field operations test with a high quality, user-friendly system that meets the needs of CBP and the trade community.

The view of field operations is an important one. We do not want to be building a system just to have the latest technology. We do not want trucks backing up at the border to meet increased technological or documentation requirements. We want a system that works for both CBP and the trade community. We want a system that allows us to meet our dual mission. Number one: protecting the nation's borders with the best technology available to meet changing security needs. Number two: protecting the American way of life and the global economy with increased efficiency. These two goals are not mutually exclusive. With the ever-escalating volume of international trade, and the growing sophistication of technology, we can and must do both to make the trade process as safe and productive as possible for everyone.

We are looking forward to continued work with the trade community, both as ACE participants, and as partners in development through groups like the Trade Support Network and through individual suggestions. If you would like to contact us with your ideas, questions, or would like to individually subscribe to this newsletter, E-mail us at cbpmo@dhs.gov. We look forward to hearing from you.

Message from Gene Rosengarden, Chairman, International Trade Data System (ITDS) Board of Directors

Gene Rosengarden

The level of trade community and federal agency participation in ITDS development is growing every day. We expect to see major expansion in the coming year as the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) goes on-line with ACE/ITDS next fall. Other agencies are not far behind. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Federal Communications Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, the International Trade Commission, the Maritime Administration, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have begun integration of their operations into ACE/ITDS design and development. The ITDS Board of Directors has also lined up more than 25 federal agencies for ACE/ITDS participation during the next year. In this issue, we preview the introduction of FMCSA to ACE/ITDS and review a successful meeting of the Government Support Network (GSN). We encourage your participation in ITDS to help ensure we build a well-integrated, user-friendly system that meets the needs of the trade community and participating government agencies. For more information on how you can get involved, please visit our website at www.ITDS.treas.gov.

CBP and FMCSA/DOT Partner to Improve Safety and Efficiency at U.S. Land Borders

By Jeff Hall, IT Project Manager, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), of the U.S. Department of Transportation, are partnering to improve truck and bus safety at our nation's land borders. Utilizing ACE/ITDS, combined with the FMCSA Query Central system, federal inspectors will have the ability to identify and contain unsafe commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) and drivers before they reach our nation's roads.

"Our partnership with ITDS and CBP will improve motor carrier safety and the efficiency of inspections at the Mexican and Canadian borders," said FMCSA Administrator Annette Sandberg.

Currently, FMCSA is working with ITDS and CBP to standardize and integrate data formats. In fall 2004, FMCSA is projected to go on-line with ACE as its Automated Truck Manifest feature is launched in the first seven of the busiest land border ports.

By linking ACE with Query Central, CBP officers will know before a bus or truck reaches the primary inspection booth at a port of entry whether the vehicle and/or the driver is free to enter U.S. roadways. Inspection personnel also will know whether they need to refer a vehicle or driver to secondary holding areas for further examination. As a result, safe CMVs and drivers will be allowed to proceed expeditiously through land border ports.

Query Central is an Intranet application used by FMCSA for the past 18 months that provides a single access point for multiple CMV safety-related data sources. These data sources are both internal and external to the agency. Originally developed for CMV inspections, compliance reviews, and safety audits, Query Central's link with ACE/ITDS will automate the inspection selection process.

Among the databases Query Central reviews are: departments of motor vehicles for U.S. states and the District of Columbia through the Commercial Driver License Information System, the Mexican Licencia Federal Information System (for Mexican carrier and driver information), the Motor Carrier Management Information System (for general carrier data and to determine whether a carrier is under an out-of-service order), the Safety and Fitness Electronic Records System (for past inspections results), the Performance and Registration Information Systems Management Program (for the carrier's registration information), and other governmental databases affecting licensing and insurance.

The sharing of information between CBP and FMCSA is designed to operate as follows:

1. CMV carrier submits electronic manifest through ACE/ITDS, which sends manifest data to FMCSA, identifying the carrier, driver, and vehicle;
2. FMCSA processes manifest data against multiple federal and state data sources to determine if the driver and/or vehicle need to be seen by FMCSA at the border;
3. FMCSA sends a response through ACE/ITDS either clearing the operator or identifying any problem areas;
4. ACE notifies the carrier of the result and lists any specified issues. This gives carriers the opportunity to resolve any safety issues prior to arrival at the border; and,
5. FMCSA inspects those problem drivers/vehicles when they arrive at the border.

Query Central will review manifest data to ensure the following: the carrier possesses valid U.S. operating authority and minimum levels of required insurance, the vehicle operator holds a valid Commercial Driver's License or foreign equivalent with appropriate endorsements, the equipment shows a current inspection by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, and whether FMCSA has issued any out-of-service orders against the carrier. If electronic data shows drivers and vehicles meet these conditions and there are no other anomalies, they will be allowed to quickly proceed. If these conditions are not met, the vehicle or driver is referred to secondary holding areas for further inspection.

ACE Access Expands to up to 20,000 Users in 2004

After a successful four-month pilot test involving 41 importers from small, mid-sized, and large companies, as well as CBP officers supporting their accounts, the portal was officially adopted by CBP in October 2003. Designed to provide easy-to-use access to consolidated border processing information, the portal is expected to increase import and export efficiency while enhancing border security.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Robert C. Bonner said, "State-of-the-art technology, like ACE, helps us create 'One Face at the Border,' with 'One Screen at the Border.' The ACE Secure Data Portal allows us to share information and ensure the right people have access to the right information at the right time when having to make the critical decisions to allow goods into our country."

The trade community is already beginning to see benefits, including an ACE pilot test participant, General Motors Corporation. General Motors Director of Customs Kevin M. Smith said, "The ACE Secure Data Portal empowers the trade community and enforces our critical role as participants in the global supply chain of U.S. trade. We all understand the importance of safe and efficient trade and how this centralization of the trade process will dramatically improve and speed up the trade process for all of us. It will make it easier for CBP, and also us, in the trade community, to track and record activities, which means issues will be resolved more quickly, increasing productivity for us and CBP."

Currently, several hundred CBP personnel and trade community users have access to the portal. Additional importer accounts are being added gradually, month-by-month, to ensure a smooth transition. Applications for broker, truck carrier, and additional importer accounts are now being accepted. Two Federal Register Notices (FRNs) in February invite participation of brokers and truck carriers in the ACE program, as well as announce a pilot test of the new periodic statement feature. A third FRN in July will announce a pilot test for the Automated Truck Manifest.

Major Expansion in the Works

Beginning with the addition of periodic payment features this summer, over the course of the year the number of users will jump from about 3,300 to approximately 20,000 users. Access will begin to be expanded at a rate of about 125 accounts per month to approximately 1,100 importer, broker, and truck carrier accounts, as well as the CBP personnel servicing those accounts, by the end of 2004. In addition, PGAs will begin to have ACE access in fall 2004, starting with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Several other federal agencies are also beginning to integrate their operations into the ACE/International Trade Data System (ITDS) design, including the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Food and Drug Administration, the International Trade Commission, the Maritime Administration, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The ITDS initiative is the instrument through which federal government agencies participate in ACE.

Acting Assistant Commissioner, OIT Charles R. Armstrong converses with CBPMO Business Executive Lawrence J. Rosenzweig about ACE.

With the addition of automated truck processing features starting this fall, ACE access will be launched on a port-by-port basis throughout seven of the busiest land-border ports. The initial seven ports are along U.S. borders at: Blaine, Washington; Buffalo and Champlain, New York; Detroit and Port Huron, Michigan; Laredo, Texas; and Otay Mesa, California. In the next phases, new sites and features will be rolled out based on job functions and locations that will have the most effect on the introduction of new features, with the goal of minimal impact to continuing operations.

The ACE is projected to be available throughout CBP ports, to multiple PGAs, and to the entire trade community by the end of 2007. It is estimated more than 1.2 million trade community users will eventually have ACE access. There are currently over 100 federal agencies involved in international trade.

Major Benefits Unfolding

Overall benefits of the transition to ACE will be tangible – U.S. citizens will be better protected from health and safety risks posed by terrorist activities and the influx of narcotics, illegal products, and unsafe goods. The trade community will have a more efficient web-based interface with government agencies, reducing the cost and burden of processing transactions for both government and the trade community. U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspectors will benefit from state-of-the-art tools to perform their jobs faster and more effectively with increased access to information. The burden of paper-intensive manual processing of goods will be reduced for everyone. Government agencies with border enforcement and regulatory responsibilities will benefit from improved sharing of information and analysis to better target and analyze goods coming into the country. Finally, moving goods to market faster and at lower cost will have positive impacts on the U.S. and global economies.

TSN Impact on ACE

By Janet Pence, TSN Administrator, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Modernization Office

The Trade Support Network (TSN) was originally established by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in 1994 to provide a forum for the discussion of significant redesign efforts with members of the trade community. Currently there are over 150 TSN members representing the diverse trade community, including trade associations, importers, brokers, carriers, sureties, and others.

With support from both CBP and the e-Customs Partnership (eCP) developing ACE, TSN members serve on trade committees providing specific expertise on ACE capabilities. Current TSN Committees include Entry, Revenue, Account Management, ITDS, Multi Modal Manifest, Transition, Exports, and Legal/Policy.

It is primarily through these committees that the trade community communicates its user requirement recommendations and overall input for the ACE program to CBP and PGAs. These committees provide critical information relating to specific business processes, including business requirements.

To date approximately fifty trade-recommended requirements have been integrated into the overall ACE contractual requirements. Specifically, trade community recommendations have had a major impact on defining the business rules for the following areas of ACE development: account establishment, account structure, access to account data, request for the availability of diversity in CBP communication modes, ability to transmit shipment data separate from trip data, ability to support multiple forms of release, and the availability of an account-based periodic payment. Additionally, further collaboration has occurred between CBP and the trade community (via the TSN Legal/Policy Committee) for those TSN user requirement recommendations that have been identified as possibly requiring statutory, regulatory, and/or policy revisions prior to being implemented.

In sum, the success of this collaborative effort is clearly evidenced by the number of trade-recommended requirements that have been accepted by CBP and the continued enthusiasm with which this established process is progressing. The mutual goal of this partnership is a fully implemented Automated Commercial Environment that serves the interests of both government and the trade community.

CBP Deputy Commissioner Douglas Browning (bottom center left) and CBPMO Business Executive Lawrence Rosenzweig (bottom center right) present "Plank Awards" symbolizing first planks in a ship to representatives of first ACE importers at September 2003 TSN meeting.

Trade Software Integration Subcommittee Formed

The TSN Transition Committee recently established the Trade Software Integration Subcommittee (TSIS). The overall scope of this subcommittee is to provide trade input regarding necessary interaction between CBP and the trade community, make recommendations on development approaches for ACE, and provide feedback on proposed electronic interfaces to be used by ACE. The subcommittee also provides a sounding board for ACE proposals regarding technical specifications and will provide a trade perspective on ACE technical development. One of the goals of this subcommittee is to ensure that the implementation guidelines issued for the electronic interface to ACE are easily understood by trade persons responsible for the design and development of trade systems.

Members of this subcommittee are representatives of TSN member companies having an interest in all aspects of the interface specifications between CBP and the trade community. Due to the technical nature of the work of this subcommittee, members must have a solid understanding of the technical specifications and issues that are addressed in subcommittee discussions. If you would like more information about this subcommittee, please contact Susan Maskell, at susan.maskell@dhs.com.

GSN Meeting Showcases ACE to Federal Agencies

By Susan C. Maskell
Supervisory ACS Specialist, Client Representative Branch,
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Gene Rosengarden

Representatives of federal agencies and the trade community met in Washington, D.C. this November at the fourth Government Support Network (GSN) meeting sponsored by CBP on behalf of the ITDS Board of Directors.

The GSN was established to provide ACE information to federal agencies with admissibility, export control, trade promotion, and statistical interests in international trade. Participants in the GSN have included current ACE PGAs, agencies targeted for future participation, and government entities with the need or desire to learn more about the ACE program. The success of this government outreach network has been measured, among other things, by the increase in the number of attendees and agencies represented at each GSN meeting.

Presentations made at this most recent GSN included a report on the status of ACE, information about expansion plans, and results of User Acceptance Tests for the recently adopted ACE Secure Data Portal. Another highlight was a presentation given by Karen Stuck, Assistant Administrator, Office of International Affairs, Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, regarding the admissibility issues being faced by this agency. New ACE capabilities to be introduced later this year were reviewed, including expanded account management, account revenue, and automated truck manifest features. Reports were also provided on the integration of FMCSA, the first PGA to interface with ACE, which is expected to occur in fall 2004.

ACE Users Say Portal Easy-to-Use, Well-Designed

Continued from page 1

"We like what we see and the way it's designed," said Ikue Stoehr of Toyota Motor Sales. Stoehr especially likes "the area of reports, where we can see our compliance reports and readily available information on our company and bond data."

The portal is "really simple and easy-to-use," according to Mae Lam of Toshiba America Electronic, who added that it saves her time and is helpful for reporting purposes. She especially likes the reporting feature, "I can track this information myself—I couldn't do that with ACS."

Lynda Thomas of Pier 1 Imports is "very pleased with the centralized management process." She said, "The ACE Secure Data Portal provides consistency for each port. For example, if we get a ruling on a product that we import, another port can look up the decision. The ACE allows decisions to be posted for each port to see."

"The ability to have almost real-time access to your data and be able to use that data to monitor your company's compliance" is the greatest benefit of ACE, according to Kelly Ausherman of The Boyds Collection, Ltd. She said, "I like the ability to go in and look at compliance assessments and information listed. We are a small port account and in the past it was harder to get that type of information. Now, the information is all in one place. We can run a report and access it easily and quickly."

Jeffrey Hicks from Glazer's Wholesale Drug Company was particularly impressed with the new reporting tools, which he found easy to navigate. "Management is all about seeing numbers, and the reports provide detailed parts and numbers."

On the CBP side, users are just as enthusiastic.

National Account Manager Cara Zamboni of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania said, "ACE has the benefits we were anticipating and hoped for, plus some we had not even thought of yet."

"We're only in the infancy of the program now, and it is already making a difference," said Client Representative Dale Wilson of Houston, Texas. "I see a lot of excitement and a lot of potential…as access increases it will greatly enhance our ability to perform our jobs."

Periodic Payment/Broker Accounts on Track for Summer

In summer 2004, CBP will initiate the transition of account revenue operations from a transaction-by-transaction process to a consolidated, account-based periodic statement and payment system. Periodic statement processing will allow for monthly statements to be generated by the 11th of a given month for the previous month's activity. The statement will reflect transactions based upon merchandise entry date or release date, whichever occurs first. This capability will initially consolidate Automated Commercial System (ACS) daily statements into a monthly statement, and will make periodic monthly statements/payments available for importers who have ACE accounts, as well as their designated brokers.

The periodic payment processing will consist of periodic payment receipt expanded to include the Automated Clearing House (ACH) Debit and ACH Credit electronic funds transfer system. Payment will be due no later than the 15th day of the month (or previous workday if the 15th is a weekend or holiday) following the month in which the merchandise is entered or released, whichever occurs first.

In February 2004, CBP issued a Federal Register Notice (FRN) to announce the testing of ACE periodic payment and account revenue capabilities. The FRN 1) provides an overview of the purpose of the test, 2) seeks confirmation from the initial 41 ACE importers who wish to participate in the test, and 3) permits brokers designated by

those importers choosing to participate to establish ACE Secure Data Portal accounts so they may file entries and make payment on the importer's behalf. Participants must be able to pay via ACH Credit/ACH debit, and be Automated Broker Interface (ABI) participants. The periodic payment pilot test is projected to begin in spring 2004.
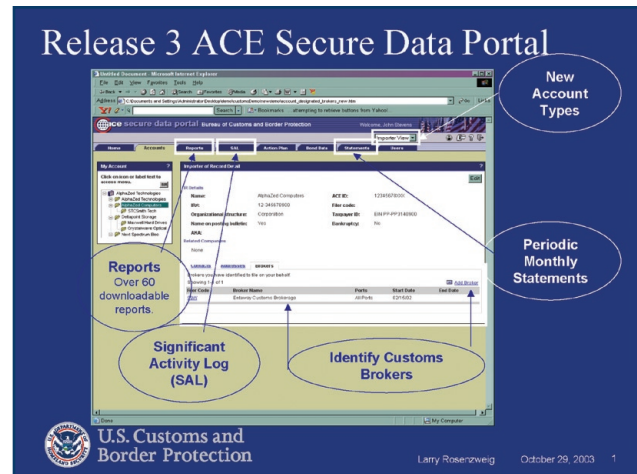
Computer screen view of ACE Secure Data Portal with Periodic Payment feature

Ask the CBPMO

Q: *What kind of equipment is needed to participate in ACE?*

A: For information about hardware and software being used to participate in ACE, visit the CBP website at www.cbp.gov. In the "Quick-Links" box on the right-hand side, click on "Trade Support Network." Then click on "ACE Access Information." This document describes the hardware, software, and user information required to access ACE. As system development progresses, further information will be provided prior to each technology release.

Q: *Where can I find information on the structure of electronic messages for ACE?*

A: The "Modernization and ACE" link from the CBP website homepage now contains a link devoted to "ACE EDI Message Drafts," which contains technical information related to Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) messages. Currently, the site displays draft EDI message formats that include the draft Customs and Trade Automated Interface Requirements (CATAIR) changes for ACE Periodic Monthly Statement, and the new/modified EDI messages for ACE Truck Manifest.

The purpose of this release of information is to assist companies in their advance planning and budgetary considerations with respect to the current CBP scope for ACE. The posted messages may be supplemented, augmented, and/or modified over time as CBP considers necessary. In the event of any changes, modifications, and/or revisions to the EDI messages posted on this link, CBP will provide the trade community with adequate notice.

The link for the "ACE EDI Message Drafts" is: http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/about/modernization/ace_edi_drafts/.

Q: *Where can I find information about how to become an ACE participant?*

A: On the CBP website at www.cbp.gov! At the top of the homepage, click on "Legal". Scroll down to a link for "Recent Federal Register Notices (FRNs) – GPO access." This page lists all the FRNs available for general public access.

A February 2004 FRN will establish designated broker accounts for participation in Periodic Payment. This FRN will 1) seek confirmation from the initial 41 ACE importers who wish to participate in the test, and 2) permit brokers designated by those importers choosing to participate to establish ACE Secure Data Portal accounts so they may file entries and make payments on the importer's behalf. An additional February 2004 FRN will establish ACE accounts for truck carriers, and a July 2004 FRN will announce the pilot test for Automated Truck Manifest.

Please send additional questions to the CBPMO at cbpmo@dhs.gov.

Automated Truck Manifest in Gear for Fall 2004

A pilot test of new truck release processing features, including the Automated Truck Manifest, will be launched in fall 2004. Using technology similar to electronic payment devices many drivers now use to pay highway tolls, this new ACE feature will allow CBP to release vehicles, containers, and other conveyances into the U.S. based on electronically filed entries and manifests, referred to as "eRelease."

The technology uses electronic transponders combined with a "proximity card." As the truck nears the border, a signal will emit from the trucker's proximity card, allowing CBP to identify trucks and drivers, and activate the retrieval of manifest and entry data for the inspector at the primary booth. The first ports to implement ACE truck manifest will be: Blaine, Washington; Buffalo and Champlain, New York; Detroit and Port Huron, Michigan; Laredo, Texas; and Otay Mesa, California. The first port will begin testing in the fall of 2004.

Two separate Federal Register Notices (FRN) are being issued announcing the establishment of truck carrier accounts and automated truck manifest testing. The first FRN for the establishment of truck carrier accounts was published in February 2004. A second notice, to be published in July 2004, announces electronic truck manifest testing. Additional details on eligibility requirements and the application process will be included in both FRNs at the time of publication.

More detail on the automation of truck manifest filings is contained in a July 23, 2003 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in the Federal Register addressing "Required Advance Electronic Presentation of Cargo Information" (Fed. Reg. Vol. 68, No. 141). The proposed regulations are specifically intended to implement the provisions of section 343(a) of the Trade Act of 2002, as amended by the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002.

CBPMO Earns Key Acquisition Process Rating

By Susan K. Hutzell, Acting Acquisition Director, ACE Increments 1 & 2, CBPMO

Culminating two years of process improvement efforts, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Modernization Office (CBPMO) received a significant project management rating of its system acquisition processes in November 2003. Joining the ranks of a limited number of private sector groups, and two military organizations, the CBPMO became the first civilian government organization to attain a Level two rating on the Software Acquisition Capability Maturity Model® (SA-CMM®).

Acting Assistant Commissioner, Office of Information and Technology Charles R. Armstrong said, "We are delighted the CBPMO has achieved this Level two rating. This effort has allowed the CBPMO to focus on improving the management of the Modernization program to continuously enhance its acquisition processes. We are committed to continuing that process and institutionalizing improvements."

The SA-CMM is a management tool designed to make software acquisition and management easier and more accountable by creating a sound organizational structure for managing system acquisition projects. It was developed in 1996 by representatives from the Department of Defense, several civilian government agencies, and private industry under the leadership of Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineering Institute (SEI).

The SA-CMM assessment team, including representatives from Carnegie Mellon's SEI, interviewed key CBPMO project staff and reviewed documents to conclude CBPMO has "repeatable" processes to manage its acquisitions, the definition of Level two. That means instead of being reliant on individual "heroics" that may not always be available, processes and procedures have been documented and institutionalized to be accessible to all the program staff who need them.

Acting CBPMO Executive Director Sharon Mazur congratulated the CBPMO on its achievement. She said, "This shows the processes are in place for the CBPMO to be a good steward of taxpayer funds when acquiring software and systems." She noted achieving the Level two rating helps maintain support for the CBP Modernization program from Congress, the General Accounting Office, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Acronym List

ABI	Automated Broker Interface
ACE	Automated Commercial Environment
ACH	Automated Clearinghouse
ACS	Automated Commercial System
AMS	Automated Manifest System
BRASS	Border Release Advanced Screening and Selectivity System
BCS	Border Cargo Selectivity
CAFES	Customs Automated Forms Entry System
CATAIR	Customs and Trade Automated Interface Requirements
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CBPMO	U.S. Customs and Border Protection Modernization Office

CMV	Commercial Motor Vehicles
CSI	Container Security Initiative
C-TPAT	Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FAST	Free and Secure Trade
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FRN	Federal Registor Notice
GSN	Government Support Network
ITDS	International Trade Data System
PAPS	Pre-Arrival Processing System
PGAs	Participating Government Agencies
SAL	Significant Activity Log
TSN	Trade Support Network